Montana Outdoors

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JANUARY–FEBRUARY 2024

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PHOTO ISSUE

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With news of "generative" artificial intelligence (AI) spreading faster than fake pictures of Pope Frances in a puffy coat, I want to reassure *Montana Outdoors* readers that the photos in this magazine are the real deal.

Generative AI refers to computer models or algorithms that create (generate) brand-new output such as text, photos, or videos. An AI image generator such as DALL-E 2 can take descriptions of nature and produce photos of startling and realistic clarity and color, artistically composed.

Ramifications for professional and amateur photographers are significant. Instead of an intrepid photographer trekking into the Purcells to capture a stunning photo of a Canada lynx in its natural surroundings, someone in their pajamas can bang one out on a smartphone while waiting for their coffee to brew.

That's not to mention the threats AI images pose to wildlife conservation. Imagine someone using the technology to create a photo of several black-footed ferrets—the rarest mammal in North America—frolicking in a park in downtown Missoula. Maybe these little carnivores aren't so endangered after all?

To ensure that no AI-generated photos sneak into *Montana Outdoors*, we closely examine the original image files (and the data embedded in them) in search of any hint of fakery or manipulation. We also rely on our submitting photographers to adhere to the highest level of ethical standards, which also includes not sending photos taken outside of Montana or any of captive animals.

But enough of this talk of photographic fakery. You've come for the visual banquet that is the *Montana Outdoors* photo issue. And once again, as has been the case since 1981, it is our pleasure to present to our subscribers the beauty and splendor of Montana's wildlife and scenery. We hope you enjoy looking at these images as much as we did selecting them.

—Tom Dickson, editor

BARBARA GARTEN
Above: Frost and shadows on Sleeping Child Road, Bitterroot National Forest southeast of Hamilton

KARL KRIEGER
Right: Silhouette of a yellow-headed blackbird on a cattail

GARY KRAMER
Cover: Canvasback at Freezout Lake Wildlife Management Area

ROBERT KELLY
Above: Bohemian waxwings eating crabapples, Whitefish

BOB MARTINKA
Below: Cedar waxwing eyeing chokecherries, Helena

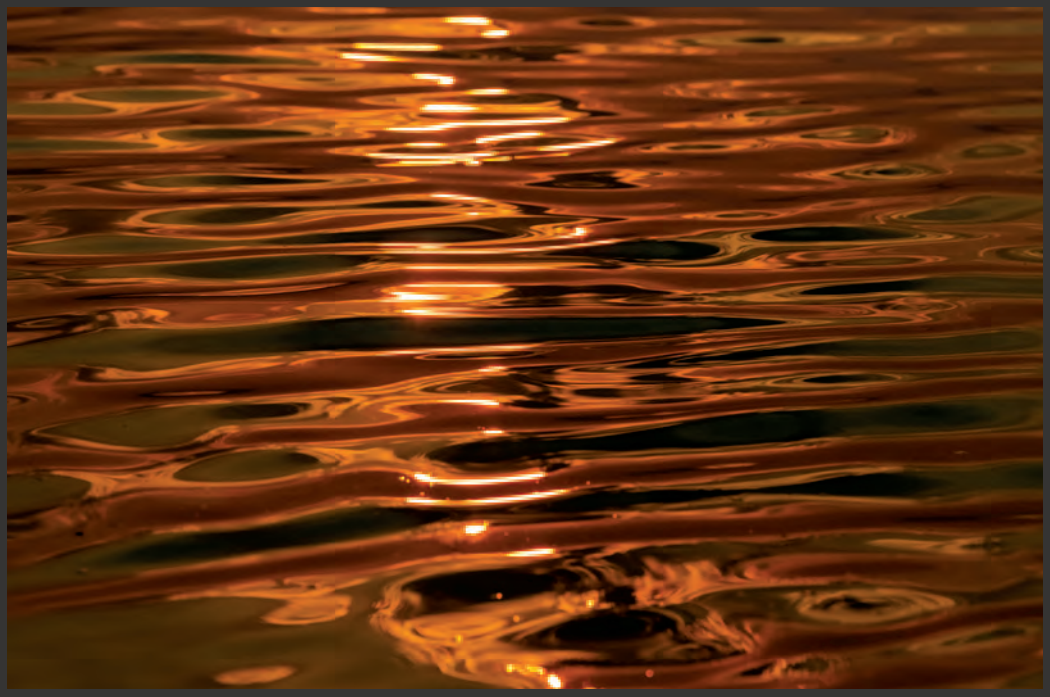
DAN ELLISON
Right: American robin popping a mountain ash berry into its mouth near Montana City

KURT CUNNINGHAM
Top: Male bobolink with a salmonfly

JEREMIE HOLLMAN
Above: Brown trout caught with an emerger fly

KELIN BOND
Left: Mayfly silhouette on a grass stalk near Three Forks

TEAGEN TURNER
Opposite page: Mayfly hatch near MIssoula



ERIN BRAATEN
Top left: Dewy spiderweb in the Bitterroot Valley

BRETT THUMA
Left: Smoky sunset over Flathead Lake's rippling water surface

JOHN LAMBING
Above: Winter sunrise over the Blackfoot River near Ovando

DAVID GAITONDE
Above: Timberline Lake in the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness

DOUG ROANE
Below: Cataract Lake and the Hilgard Back Basin, Lee Metcalf Wilderness

RANDY SMITH
Top: American pika in the Sapphire Mountains

LESTER A. KISH
Middle: Pygmy bitterroot, Wisconsin Creek in the Tobacco Root Mountains

TRACY SCOTT
Bottom: Mountain goat kid, Glacier National Park

JERRY TAYLOR
Top: Young whitetail buck in early spring near Bozeman

ZACK CLOTHIER
Above: Great gray owl, western Montana

PATRICK DIEKEMPER
Right: Wet cow moose near Red Lodge

EDWARD MORETH
Above: Honeybee

ROBERT LESTER
Right: Bumblebee

Far right, from top:

DAN ELLISON
Bumblebee in pasque-flower, Grouse Creek

ESTELLE SHUTTLEWORTH
Horn-faced leafcutter bee

ELIZABETH MOORE
Bumblebee and sunflower

RANGANATH PARTHASARATHY
Top: Elk herd on a hilltop along the northern border of Yellowstone National Park

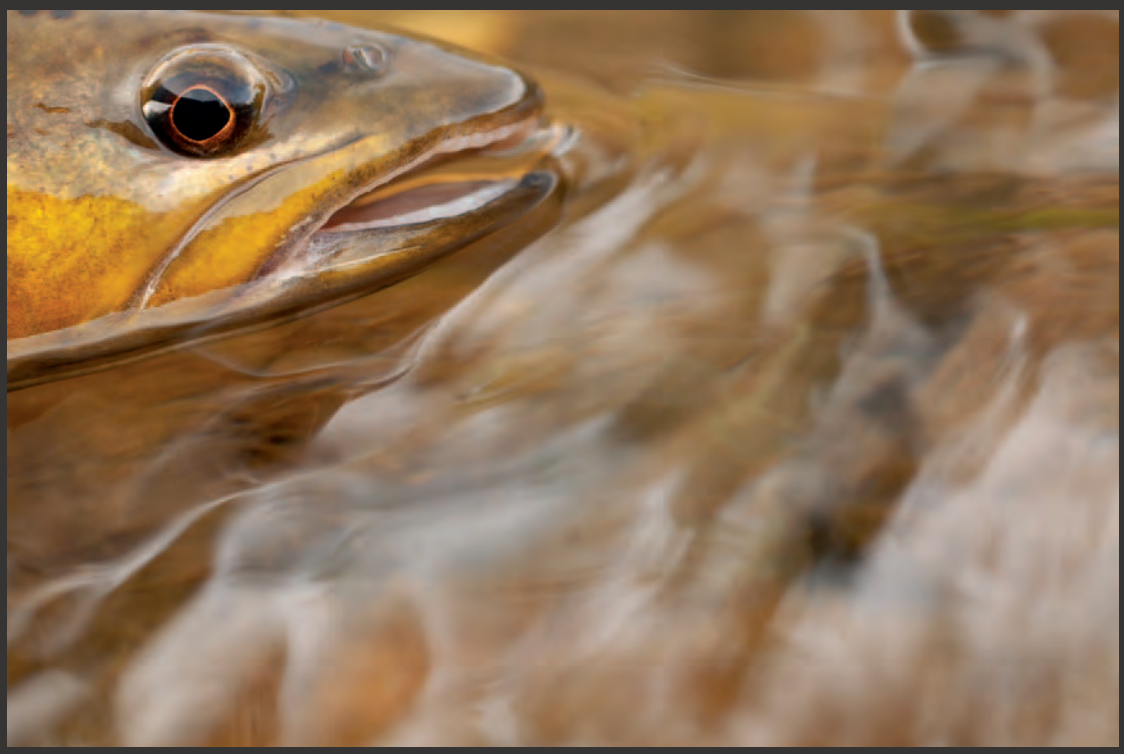
JAKE WILLSON
Above: Bull elk fighting in a shallow pond

CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON
Above: Bull elk in velvet near Gardiner

JOHN DOMITROVICH
Left: Cow elk

NATHAN COOPER
Above: Shortnose gar, Fort Peck Reservoir

JEREMIE HOLLMAN
Right: Brown trout, Bitterroot River



STEVEN AKRE
Left: Channel catfish, Yellowstone River near Kinsey

ZACH SHATTUCK
Below: White sucker, Beaver Creek near York

DANIEL RIEBE
Top: Sandhill cranes and hen mallard near Madison Buffalo Jump State Park

LAURA VERHAEGHE
Above left: Ponderosa pine forest understory of Indian paintbrush, lupine, and arnica near Helmville

KEVIN LEAGUE
Above right: Long-billed curlew in a mixed-grass prairie in central Montana

MICHAEL REAVIS
Ski mountaineering in the
Great Bear Wilderness

STEVEN GNAM
Mountaineer exploring
an ice cave in
Glacier National Park

Clockwise from top left

GARY HONOLD
Pronghorn buck on the Bison Range, near Moiese

TAYLOR McDOWELL
Pronghorn fawn

RODNEY SCHLECHT
Pronghorn doe babysitting fawns while other does feed, near Cascade

CRAIG MILLER
Pronghorn fawn, eastern Montana

NEAL & MJ MISHLER
Pronghorn buck on the Bison Range

ZACH SHATTUCK
Blue sucker, Missouri River
in eastern Montana

SEAN R. HEAVEY
Above: Frigid sunrise
over Fort Peck Reservoir

LEE NELSON
Left: Yaak Valley sunrise

ANDREA DiNINO
Top: Common garter snake, Swan Valley

KARL KRIEGER
Above: Prairie rattlesnake, central Montana

CRAIG BARFOOT
Above: North American racer near Perma

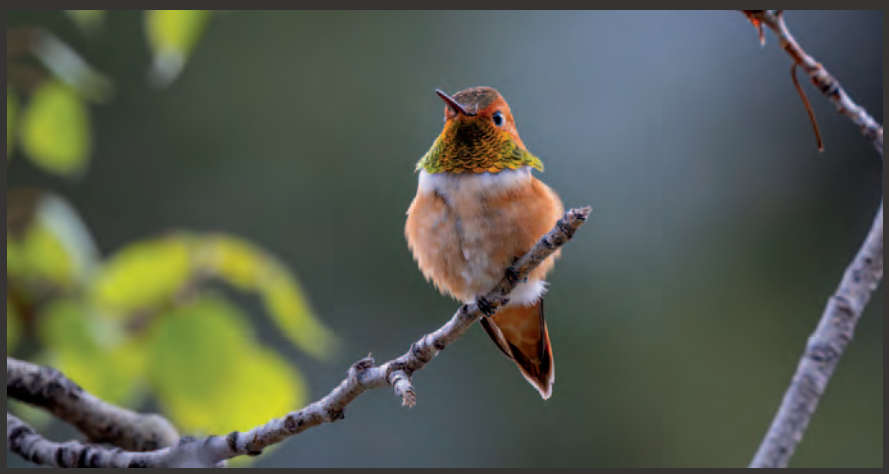
SHARON DEWART-HANSEN
Top left: Broad-tailed hummingbird

BILL KINNEY
Above left: Male calliope hummingbird

DAN ELLISON
Top right: Black-chinned hummingbird

WILLIAM WOESSNER
Middle right: Rufous hummingbird

JOSHUA RUTLEDGE
Bottom right: Rufous hummingbird

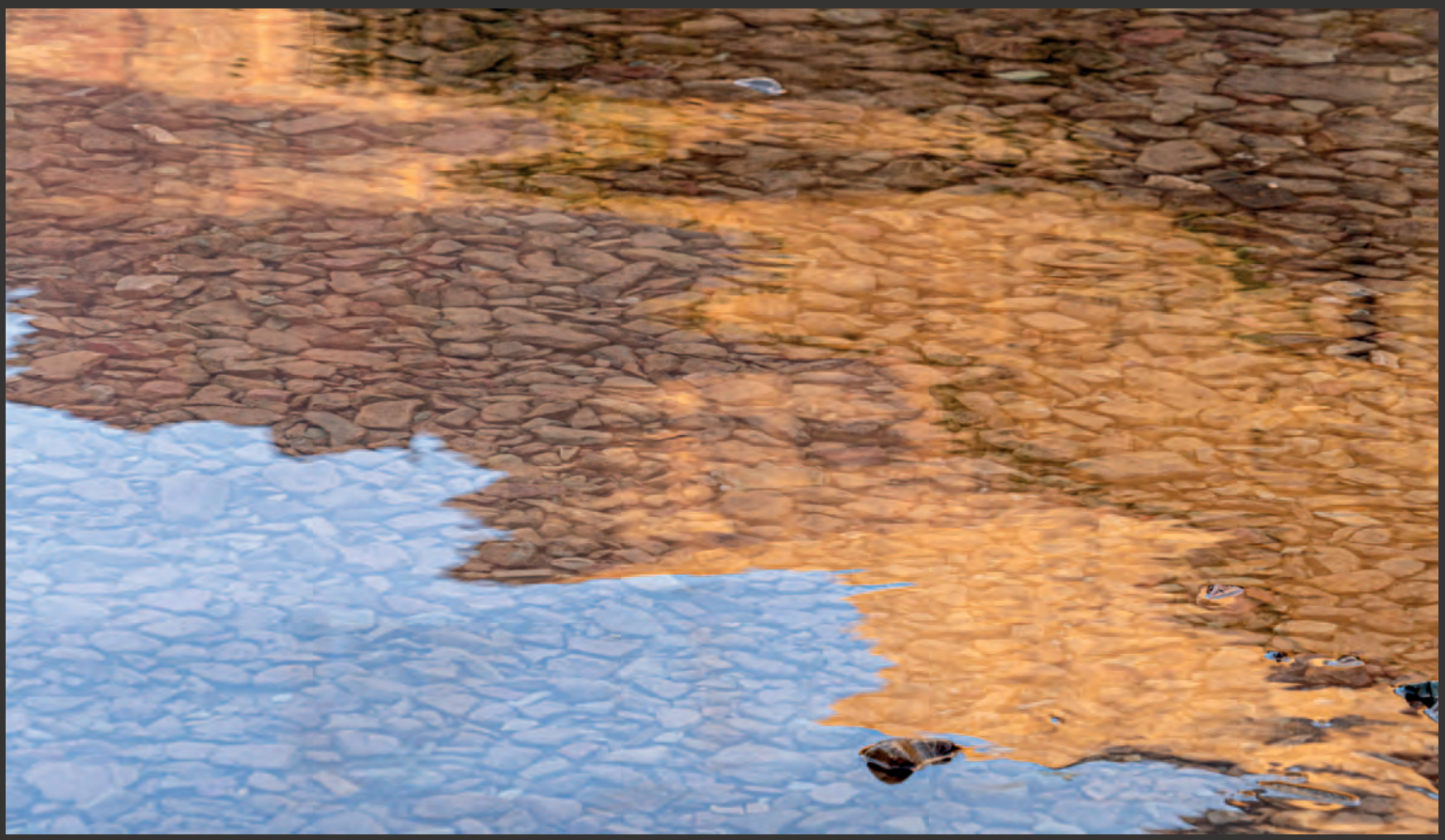


KC GLASTETTER
Above: Calliope hummingbirds in courtship display

ARNIE GIDLOW
Left: Rufous hummingbird and honeysuckle

FRAN NUNN
Top: Tracks along the Yellowstone River, Bundy Bridge Fishing Access Site

JESS McGLOTHLIN
Above: The undulating Smith River, Meagher County



KC GLASTETTER
Top: Reflection on Two Medicine Lake, Glacier National Park

NATHAN COOPER
Above: Ice forming on Fort Peck Lake

CRAIG MILLER
Above: Black-footed ferret, central Montana

Left to right:

KALON BAUGHAN
Wolverine, Helena–Lewis and Clark National Forest

MARK BOESCH
Long-tailed weasel in Ambrose Creek near Stevensville

DAN NICHOLS
Short-tailed weasel in winter coat

ANDREA DiNINO
Above left: Ice on an aster, Swan Valley

LAURA VERHAEGHE
Below: Hoar frost on ponderosa pines, Bitterroot River

RICK CLARK
Above right: Mountain chickadee

DOUG TATE
Below left: Pygmy rabbit, Sheep Creek near Dell

JOHN CHART
Above: Hoar frost, Helena Valley Regulating Reservoir

NICK FUCCI
Below right: Snowshoe hare, Lake Mary Ronan State Park

WARD HANNING
Right: Great blue heron, Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge

JOHN CARLSON
Below: White-faced ibis, Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge

ROBERT KELLY
Top: Sandhill cranes at sunset over West Valley Ponds near Kalispell

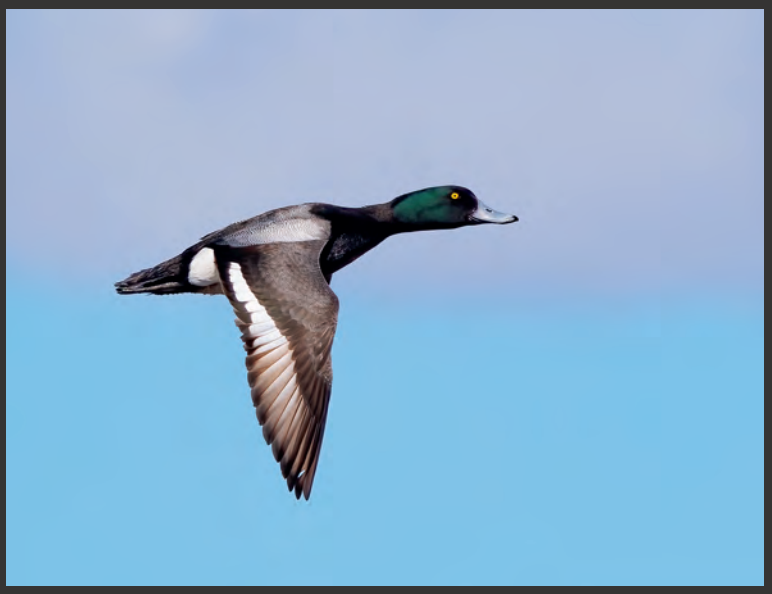
CRAIG & LIZ LARCOM
Above left: Black-necked stilt, Freezout Lake Wildlife Management Area

KARL KRIEGER
Above right: Long-billed curlew near Three Forks

JOEL MAES
Below left: Male northern pintail, Benton Lake National Wildlife Refuge

JOHN CARLSON
Below right: Male greater scaup over the Broadview Ponds Fishing Access Site

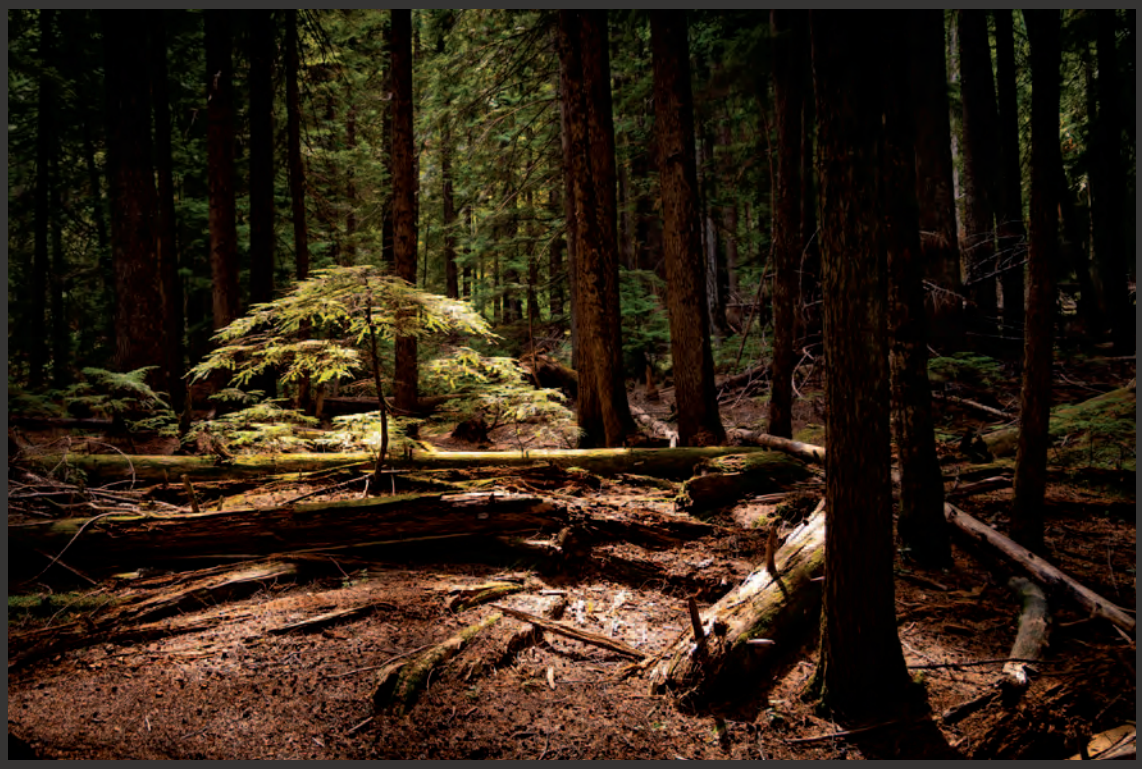
SAM KOENEN
Bottom: Trumpeter swans over Central Park Pond near Bozeman



STEVE MITCHELL
Top: Canada goose flying over a field

LEA FRYE
Above left: Male ruddy duck, K-Mart Wetlands in Helena

CAROL POLICH
Above right: Male northern shovelers during spring breeding, Three Forks



MICHAEL SLEETING
Top: Ross Creek Cedars Scenic Area, Kootenai National Forest, near Libby

DEE LINNELL BLANK
Above: Whitebark pine seedlings sprouting on Baldy Mountain in the East Pioneer Range

DICK WALKER
Top left: Sara, or Julia, orangetip butterfly on a serviceberry

DOMINICK SPERANZA
Top right: Gillette's checkerspot butterfly on a buttercup, Larabee Gulch

KATE HOLLEY
Middle left: Dewdrops on an Oregon grape leaf

PAUL HOLDORF
Middle right: Raindrops on a glacier lily

STEVEN AKRE
Bottom left: Detail of a corn lily (back) and sword fern near Lolo

RODNEY SCHLECHT
Bottom right: Calypso orchid on the Rocky Mountain Front near Augusta

ZACK CLOTHIER
Above: Coyote pup during a smoky sunrise atop a ridge above the Swan Valley

ADDIE LOHMAN
Below: Coyote scavenging near a bison herd outside the north gate of Yellowstone National Park

TRACY ENTERLINE
Below: Red fox near Gardiner

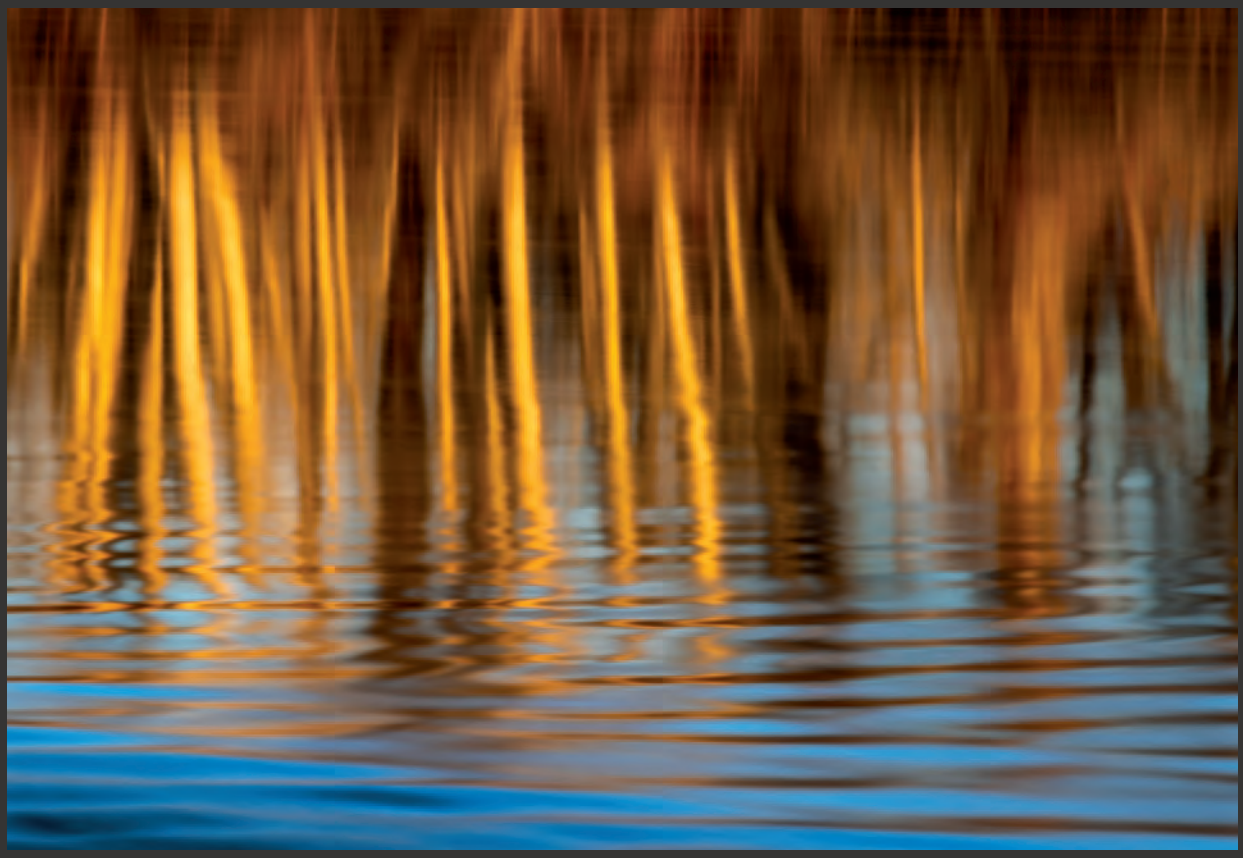
ASHLEY NOBLE
Right: Silver phase red fox near Livingston

MARK PETERS
Left: Red fox kit, Park County

ROBERT F. COOK
Above: Red fox along O'Rea Creek near Livingston

JAY STYLES
Right: Quaking aspen near West Glacier

STEPHANI HOLDORF
Below: Icy winter sunrise at Canyon Ferry Reservoir



CRYSTAL JOHNSON
Above: Sunrise over grasslands and shallow wetland in Sheridan County

CHUCK HANEY
Left: Sunset reflections on the Flathead River near Kalispell

DOUG TATE
Above: Elk antler shed near Butte

RANDY BEACHAM
Below: Algae-covered, rodent-chewed moose antler shed, West Fork Yaak Roadless Area, Kootenai National Forest

JORDAN LEFLER
Facing page: Deer shed with lone raindrop in Lake McDonald, Glacier National Park

DONALD M. JONES Moose cow feeding, Glacier National Park

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